Slaying-Panel Foes Utilize No-Conspiracy Report

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Justice Department conclusion that no evidence exists of a conspiracy in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was used by House members who sought unsuccessfully Wednesday to block the re-establishment of a committee to probe the slayings of the civil rights leader and President John F. Kennedy.

A team of attorneys from the department's Office of Professional Responsibility conducted a 10-month review of the King case and concluded that James Earl Ray acted alone [illegible] King, department sources said.

The disclosure of the Justice findings came shortly before the House began debate on a move to extend the life of the House Assassinations Committee for two months.

Later, by a 237 to 164 vote, the House extended the life of the committee until March 31, when its work will be completed.

The committee became embroiled in controversy last year because of its proposed two-year, $6.4-million budget and the conduct of chief counsel Richard Sprague.

The Justice Department legal team sent its King report to former Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi shortly before he left office Jan. 20.

Levi ordered an examination of an estimated 200,000 FBI documents concerning the investigation of King's assassination last April.

The department plans to make public a censored version of the report.

But the release has been delayed because department officials thought it might appear to [illegible] House in its debate.

Department officials also wanted to give Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell, who took office a week ago, time to review the findings.

Meanwhile, Rep. Harold Ford of Memphis has asked committee members for the authority to interview Ray at Brushy Mountain State Prison. Ford said he would ask Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Texas) to allow him and three or four other committee members to visit Ray.

Ray has indicated he would like to give [illegible] committee.